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the last world was dissolved in chaos. On this hill five lotus buds sprang out of the earth; they opened into blossom, and from each flew a sacred bird which bore a sacred yellow robe towards the heavens. These five robes presaged the coming of five Buddhas who would guide the future world along the noble path to Nirvana. After this sign, that former world was destroyed; the present world followed, and the Buddhas appeared as foretold: Kaukathan, Gaunagong, Kathapa and Gautama, who successively attained enlightenment in this world, and whose statues now sit, each fifty feet tall and twenty feet broad, back to back in a great quadrate at the Kyaukpun Pagoda, calm and majestic as the grass grows about them and the rain washes down on their faces, awaiting the arrival of the fifth and last Buddha, after which this world cycle will be destroyed in a universal chaos. As each Buddha saw his enlightenment in this world he left a relic at the Theinguttara Hill, which had foretold his coming and which would now mark his attainment of wisdom—Kaukathan his staff, Gaunagon his water filter, Kathapa a portion of his robe, and Gautama his eight hairs which were enshrined in the first Shwe Dagon Pagoda after many perilous journeys.

But now the importance of Rangoon banishes all that into the realm of our dreams. The beginnings of trade date from about 1760 after King Alaungpaya had won a battle here and called the place Yangon: end of strife; but the big foreign port sprang up suddenly after 1852 when the British gained possession of it; the ships coming into its harbour from the oceans grew larger and larger, buildings followed the expanding commerce, roads and railways were built to all parts of Burma, foreigners crowded in and stamped its character, and by 1941 Rangoon had become a cosmopolitan city of over 500,000 inhabitants, more than three times larger than the next largest city in Burma and controlling over 80% of its export trade.

If the Burmese Empire of former days had been a sea-power, the development of Rangoon would not have been left to this late day, for its position makes it the obvious port for the whole country, and it had many natural beauties which would have made it a fair metropolis. Twenty-one miles up from the open sea, the Rangoon River gives a broad sweep to the left and allows a frontage of over two miles for ocean shipping to anchor. The river is a continuation of the Hlaing River flowing southwards from about 50 miles north of Rangoon and this, with the Pegu River and the Pazundaung Creek which join its waters opposite Rangoon from the right, made inland water transport also easy. The land giving on to the Rangoon River was open and flat for the layout of a fine city, with, further in, lakes and wooded hillocks, but just north of Rangoon the range of hills known as the Pegu Yomas stretched northwards for

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361 about 300 miles, dividing the valley of the Irrawaddy from that of the
504 Sittang, both rich alluvial valleys, so that Rangoon could stretch out its
arms uninterruptedly, by road and rail and water, far up these valleys,
and draw down their teak, oil and other products for export.

The actual development had taken advantage of these natural points. Along the river front were several wharves which, dredged and drained carefully, could take vessels up to 8,000 tons. Back from the Strand the city was laid out in three parallel rows, roughly two miles from east to west. Cutting down across these rows to the biggest wharf area was the broad Sule Pagoda Road with the hill of the pagoda forming the natural central circus of the city. In this area of neatly laid out streets were the shops, offices, congested city dwellings, bazaars, narrow shut-in buildings and all the appurtenances of a city; and just where the innermost parallel ended, the railway looped through, flinging one arm up to join Prome on the central Irrawaddy, the other to Mandalay 386 miles away, and, from this arm, a line down to the Tenasserim coast. Beyond the city area the residential areas and suburbs stretched—fringing the Royal Lakes just outside with big houses of rich people; nestling among the wooded hilly Golden Valley round the slopes of the Shwe Dagon Hill, the smallness of this hilly area being drawn out with the meandering of the roads, so that the Burmese named part of it *Wingaba*, a maze, which hid cool retreats like the *Nga Dat Gyi*: Five Levels Pagoda, and a tank of sacred turtles; extending miles in a pleasant garden city of newer rich bungalows till it reached the Victoria Lakes, the University Estate and the airport beyond; taking on a village character in small wooden houses of a Burmese quarter at Kemmendine along which the Rangoon River flowed as a country river; and straggling out in less pleasant poor suburbs to the east along the Pazundaung Creek.

346 Over all this area, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda shone like a golden light. Theinguttara Hill, besides being an echo of the last world, is also the last spur of the Pegu Yomas chain which gradually peters out north of Rangoon. It has been built up to about 150 feet above the surrounding area, and from this platform the Shwe Dagon Pagoda rises, from an octagonal plinth moulded into a lotus bloom turned downwards, tapering into soft encircling rings from which is moulded again a gently swelling plantain bud, the clay merging into more soft undulations which rise to the very summit in the tightest bud of all—the *seinbu*, diamond bud—forming, by a re-echoing of the lotus buds which once sprang up here, a shapely slender spire, tapering to the point of a bud and yet composed of curves and gentle fullness. The whole pagoda was covered with pure gold leaf and its summit was crowned with a delicate *hti*, an umbrella of gold on whose rings were hung gold and silver jewelled bells which

Ba a *role* under the kings of Burma, who farmed out customs and taxes to them.
Bse Symes, writing in 1800, mentions that there were then one hundred Europeans in
563 Rangoon. With the exception of a few merchants and masters of ships, the
European standard at that time was not a good one. At present the authority
of the handful of British in Burma ramifies into the old native channels of
government by which the mass of the population is reached.

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